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(50) TEL: AEXOSOL DRUG-DESPENSING WITH MEMBRANE FOR CONTROLLING VACUUM DURING DESPENSING AI WO 02/38207

(57) Abstract: As acrosol deng-dispusadog devica (25) provides send does of a plantacondeclogically active Squid (7) to a holding reservoir (13), which includes a perforate membrane (16) those which the does is dispensed as an expessed spray. The holding processor (18) to formed in a chamber (v2) which has a proveble rather in the form of a realitest displayers (15) which is anathable to vary the volume of, and thos adject the pressure in, the chamber(v2) to provide a pressure differential across the resilient disphysion (15) during actuation of the performs membrane (16) such that the pressure within the holding reservoir (12) is less than the embiect pressure on the opposite side of the perforate meanbrans (16). A control device (V1, 5, 19) is arranged to control the structing of the stall-est displanges (1.5) and that the generation of the differential pressure across the perferate membrane (16).

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ABROSOL DECO-DISPOSSING WITH MEMBRANE FOR CONTROLLING VACOUM DURING DISPENSING

This invention relates to aerosol drug dispensing devices and, in particular, to those devices in which pharmacologically active liquid is provided to a holding reservoir from which the dose is then dispensed as an aerosol apray.

Prior known aerosol drug dispensing devices have used a number of different means for creating a negative pressure behind a perforate membrane which acts as part of a corny head, in order that a dose of pharmacologically active liquid carn be dispersed as a spray, the perforate membrane must be actuated to cause liquid flow though the perforate membrane.

Previously, the perforate membrane has been actuated by vibrating means and the pressure on the fauld side of the perforate membrane altered by means such as a pump or an expanding syrings mechanism. These methods have proved to be complex and the devices are difficult to manufacture.

Our earlier International patent application, WQ95/15822, discloses a dispensing apparatus having a perforate membrane through which droplets are dispensed. The perforate membrane is provided with a number of perforations having a reverse taper, namely a targer cross-sectional area at that face of the membrane away from which liquid droplets emerge than at the opposite face of the membrane, from which opposite face liquid flows in use to replace that in the emerging droplet spray.

The present invention aims to overcome the above problems.

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According to the present Invention, there is provided an aerosol drug dispensing device in which a metered dose of a pharmacologically active liquid is provided to a holding reserved from which the dose is then dispersed as an aerosol apray, the holding reservoir including a perforate membrane from which the dose is dispensed by actuation of the perforate membrane to cause liquid flow through the perforate membrane, the perforate membrane having perforations having a reverse taper, namely a larger crosssectional area at that face of the membrane away from which figuid droplets emerge then at the opposite face of the membrane, characterised in that:

the holding reservoir is disposed in a chamber having a movable surface in the form of a resilient disphragm, which is stretchable to vary the volume of, and thus adjust the pressure in, the chamber to provide a pressure differential across the resilient disphragm during actuation of the perforate membrane such that the pressure within the holding reservoir is less than the ambient pressure on the opposite side of the perforate

a control device is enranged to control the stretching of the resident disphragm and thus the generation of the differential pressure ecross the perforate membrane.

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 In this way, the differential pressure can simply and accurately be controlled such that the required pressure differential is easily maintained.

Preferably, the resilient disphragm is formed from an elastomeric material such as rubber.

Preferably, the chamber contains one or more valves for controlling the triet and/or outlet of fluids from the chamber.

The control device may be a reciprocating plunger which is connected to the resEent disphragm substantially at the centre.

Preferably, the resilient diaphragm to clamped by a spray head assembly substantially at its outer edge. Sealing means such as an O-ring may be provided to ensure no fluid flows past the resilient disphragm.

An embodiment of the present invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Fig. 1 shows a cross sectional side view of a device according to the present 15 invention;

Figs. 2 to 6 show successive stages during operation of the device of Fig. 1; Fig. 7 shows a trigger circuit for controlling the dispensing of the pharmacologically active Equid; and

Figs. 8a and 8b illustrate, in section, preferred forms of the perforate membrane for the device of Fig. 1.

As can be seen from Figs. 1 to 6, a drug dispensing device 25 forming part of a drug delivery system has a hollow casing 1 in which a reservoir body 2 is slidably mounted. A spray head mounting assembly 3 is attached to one end of the casing 1, the mounting assembly 3 comprising spray head assembly 3a, clamping means 4, disphragm clamp 11a and seal 17. A main return spring 5 is provided between a recess... 29 in the casing 1 and the reservoir body 2 to support the reservoir body 2, biassed towards its topmost position (as shown), within the casing 1. The reservoir body 2 is movable between a first and second position within the casing 1.

The reservoir body 2 has a reservoir cavity 6 in which a bould drug 7 is stored and which can be topped-up via a re-fit port 23. A plunger 8 is provided within the reservoir body 2 and extends out of the upper (as shown in the figures) and of the reservoir body 2, such that it engages with a cap 9 which covers the top of the device 25. A plunger return spring 10 is provided which extends from the reservoir body 2 and blases the plunger 8 out of the reservoir cavity 6.

A metering cavity 12 is provided at the lower end of the reservoir cavity 6 and the metering cavity 12 is in figuid communication, via a one-way ball valve 13, with a dispersing conduit or tube 14 provided within the lower end of the reservoir body 2. An

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elestomeric diaphragm 15 is provided around the tower portion of the reservoir body 2 and is joined at its outer edge to the casing 1 by diaphragm clamp 11a and a seal 11, which is an O-ring, to define, together with the reservoir body 2 and the casing 1, a chamber V1.

The sprey head mounting assembly 3 is provided with a damping infext valve 19 leading into the chamber V1, a first one-way exhaust valve 20 from the chamber V1 and a second one-way exhaust valve 21 from the chamber V2.

Fig. 1 shows the device 25 at rest prior to meticing a predefined dose of drug 7 into the holding reservoir 18. In this state, both the main return spring 5 and the plunger return spring 10 are extended so that the reservoir body 2 and the plunger 8 have been pushed fully upwards against physical stops (not shown).

The elastomeric diaphragm 15 is stretched from its normally flat state and acts as a flexible wall, separating the two chembers V1 and V2. These chambers are initially at ambient pressure and the perforations 50 in the perforate portion 27 of membrane 16 are dry and open.

The operation of the device shown in Fig. 1 will now be described with reference to Figs. 2 to 6.

To initiate operation of the device 25, the cap 9 is pressed downwards 9a (see Fig. 2). The reservoir body 2 and the plunger 8 are moved downwards at approximately the same rate, compressing the main return spring 5 until the reservoir body 2 reaches physical stops 28. At this stage the force exerted on the plunger return spring 10 is less than its preload. The lower end of the dispansing conduit or tube 14 is now positioned close to the inner surface of the membrane 16.

The reservoir body 2 forms an air-light sliding seal with the casing 1. Therefore, as the reservoir body 2 descends, air is displaced from the chamber V1, through the first one-way exhaust valve 20 and the elastomeric disphragm 15 returns towards its relaxed, 35 "atmost tist state. At the same time, air is displaced from the chamber V2 through the second one-way exhaust valve 21, through the damping valve 19, and through the perforate portion 27 of the membrane 16.

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pressures generated in the chambers V1, V2 and by tension in the elastomeric diaphragm 15.

However, when the damping valve 19 is slightly open, it will allow air to enter into, and conversely exhaust from, the chamber V1 at a rate determined by the restoring force of the main return spring 5. Therefore, as the main return spring 5 pushes the reservoir body 2 upwards 2s, the volume of chamber V1 expands at a controlled rate until the reservoir body 2 reaches a predefined physical stop (not shown) (see Fig. 6).

The main return spring 5 also causes the elastomeric disphragm 15 to stretch at a controlled rate which, in turn, causes the volume of the chamber V2 to expand at a controlled rate. The pressure within the chamber V2 behind the spray head assembly 3s therefore reduces at a controlled rate.

The physical stop (not shown) for the upward movement of the reservoir body 2 limits the extension of the stratched elastomeric disphragm 15 and defines the final volume change of the chamber V2 and thus the target negative pressure achieved in V2. At this stage, the pressure in the chamber V1 is at ambient pressure.

Therefore, the net result is that the target (operating) negative pressure, which is close to the bubble point pressure for the apray head assembly 3a (the bubble point pressure being the pressure differential at which sir bubbles enter the chamber V2 through the perforations 50 in the perforate portion 27, by overcoming the surface tension of the ments of liquid drug), can be reached at a controlled rate without air being ingested through the membrane 16.

If the negative pressure in the chamber V2 is generated too quickly, i.e. by opening the damping valve 19 too far, then the surface templon of the liquid drug covering the perforations in the perforate portion 27 of the membrane 16 will be overcome. Air will then be ingested rapidly through the perforate portion 27, hence cancelling the negative pressure in the chamber V2. In the absence of a negative pressure, the drug dispensing device 25 will not generate a apray.

It should be noted that the rate of ob admission and extraustion through damping valve 19 is much less than the rate of exhaustion through the first one way exhaust valve

An electronic control circuit 30 as shown in Fig. 7 triggers the delivery of the liquid \*\* drug through the perforate portion 27 of the membrane 16 by controlling membrane actuating means (not shown) such as piezoelectrically activated vibrating means. The control system uses a small hot wise enemometer 39 to monitor air flow into the drug delivery system. The anemometer 39 senses when a patient is inhaling and trying to trigger the spray head delivery.

As can be seen in Fig. 3, once the reservoir body 2 has reached its physical stops 28, further depression of the cap 9 compresses the plunger return spring 10. This pushes 8a the plunger 8 into the metering cavity 12 (see Fig. 1). The plunger 8 is provided with a plunger seal 24 which engages with the side wall 12a of the metering cavity 12 to form a seal therewith. This traps a metered dose of the Equid drug 7 in the metering cavity 12. The sealing pressure of the plunger seal 24 against the side-wall 12a of the metering cavity 12 is greater than the sealing pressure of the elastomeric ball valve 13 against the ball valve seat 13a. Therefore, as the plunger 8 is depressed further, the trapped dose of Equid drug 7 is displaced from the metering cavity 12 past 13b the one-way elastomeric ball valve 13, through the dispensing conduit or tube 14 and into the holding reservoir 18. The holding reservoir 18 has a side-wall 22 which is either coated with or formed of PTFE. In this configuration, all of the perforations 50 in the perforate portion 27 of membrane 18 are now covered with Equid drug 7s.

Once the cap 9 is released, as shown in Fig. 4, the plurger return spring 10 starts to expand, pushing 8b the plurger 8 out of the metering cavity 12, thus creating a partial vacuum in the metering cavity 12. The elastometic ball valve 13 remains closed. The plurger return spring 10 is strong enough to overcome this partial vacuum so as to push 8b the plurger 8 clear of the metering cavity 12 until it reaches a physical stop (not shown). This partial vacuum pressure reduces as the plurger 8 is withdrawn 8b from the metering cavity 12 until the pressure drop across the plurger seal 24 exceeds the sealing pressure against the side-wall 12a of the metering cavity 12. A small amount of liquid drug 7 can then flow past the plurger seal 24 into the metering cavity 12 as the plurger 8 is withdrawn 8b. The main return spring 6 is able to extend, pushing 2a the reservoir body 2 upwards as shown in Fig. 5. This then causes the chambers V1 and V2 to expand and the elastomeric disphragm 15 to stretch.

Air cannot enter through the one-way velves 20, 21 or through the perforate portion 27 of membrane 18 as the perforations,50 are now covered by liquid drug 7a. The perforations 50 realst air ingress because of the surface tension of the liquid drug forming menisci across the perforations 50 in the perforate portion 27 and therefore, as the chambers V1 and V2 expand, the pressures within those chambers decrease below emblent pressure. The reservoir body 2 continues to move upwards 2s until the restoring force of the main return spring 5 is stalled by the opposing forces created, in the main, by the negative pressures in the chambers V1 and V2 and by the tension in the elastomeric diaphragm 15.

When the damping valve 19 is fully closed, no air can enter the chamber V1 and so the main return spring 5 will not extend for before it is stalled by the negative

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The maximum spring load of the plunger return spring 10 preferably should not exceed 20N. This therefore limits the force that a user must exert in order to operate the

The plunger return spring 10 is preloaded and this preload should be greater than the fully compressed load in the main return spring 5. This ensures that the reservoir body 2 is fully down against its physical stop 28 before the dose is metered into the holding reservoir 18. If the dose is metered from the dispensing aperture 14 when the reservoir body 2 is not fully down, all or part of the dose may miss the holding reservoir 18. The target negative pressure in the chamber V2 will then not be reached when the cap 9 is released because the perforations in the perforate portion 27 of the membrane 18 will remain dry and open.

As the plunger 8 is withdrawn 85 from the reservoir cavity 12 a partial vacuum is created between the closed one-way elestomeric ball-valve 13 and the plunger seal 24. The spring force range of the plunger return spring 10 must be sufficient to lift the plunger 8 out of the reservoir cavity 12 when the cap 9 when the cap is released, in order to create 8 pressure difference ecross the plunger seal 24 (between the liquid drug. - 7 in reservoir cavity 6 and the elastomeric ball valve 13) which exceeds the sealing pressure of the plunger seal 24 against the side-wall 12s of the reservoir cavity 12. Uquid drug 7 is then above to flow past the plunger seal 24 and into the reservoir cavity 12 as the plunger 8 is withdrawn 8b. This has the advantage of minimising foam generation within the reservoir cavity 12 especially with liquid drugs containing surfactants as part of their formulation.

The spring force range of the main return spring 5 must be sufficient to lift the reservoir body 2 egainst the negative pressures generated within the chambers V1,V2, the stretching of the elastomeric disphragms 15 and the friction of the stiding scalbetween the reservoir body 2 and the casing 1.

The maximum tension in the elastomeric displangm 15, which is echieved when the reservoir body 2 is at rest, must be high enough to maintain the target negative pressure within the chamber V2 without the elastomeric displangm 15 deforming under of that negative pressure. This tensional force must not be high enough to prevent the main return spring 5 from titing the reservoir body 2 up against the predetermined physical stop during the generation of the negative pressures.

to summary, the extension force of the plunger return spring 10 is greater than the extension force of the main return spring 5 which is greater than the tensional force of the elastomeric disphragm 15.

From Fig. 7, it can be seen that the control circuit employs two operational amplifiers (op-emps) 31, 32, which can supply output voltages over the full power supply

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range, Lo. between the supply voltage Voc and ground GND. Op-smp 31 is in closed loop configuration with a Wheststone bridge to maintain a constant resistance of the enemometer filament 39. The drive voltage 40 for the Wheatstone bridge is supplied to the opemp 32 which is configured as a voltage comparator. The comparator is a switching device having a measurement input and a reference input. When the measurement vottage 33 is higher than the reference voltage 34, the output 35 from the

.op-emp 32 switches from GND to Voc.

. Circuits of this type are well known in enemometry. However the circuit of Fig. 7 shows a simple implementation of a circuit which can discriminate between high and low rates of change of air flow. The RC time constant used for the reference voltage 34 is set so that it can respond, in a damped manner, to slowly varying conditions such as changes in ambient conditions and to the normal slow breathing of a patient. Therefore, the reference voltage 34 is inscrisitive to test rates of change in eir flow during the patient inhabition cycle. The measurement voltage 33 at the comparator opamp 32 is an attenuated signal from the Wheatstone bridge drive voltage 40, but does not have a long time constant filter and so reacts directly with the patient's inhalation.

If the patient inhales at a sufficiently high volume rate, then the measurement voltage 33 will exceed the reference voltage 34 due to the difference in the time constant of the reference and measurement voltages. In order for this to happen, a certain threshold of rate of change of air flow must be exceeded. When the measurement voltage 33 exceeds the reference voltage input 34, there will be a change in the voltage state at the output 35. Since the compension circuit does not have any feedback, it is operating in a high gain mode and so has only two output states, 0v and Voc. Thus, it is possible to couple this circuit directly to TTL logic devices.

Two variable resistors 38, 37 are provided within the control direuit 30. The vertable resistor 38 in the comparator is used to adjust the level of attenuation applied to the measurement voltage 33, which sets the sensitivity of the circuit to the rate of charge of patient's inhalation. The second variable resistor 37, in the Wheststone bridge, is provided to set the temperature of the anemometer filament 39 and is used. to set the minimum rate of change of air flow that the circuit can detect. Thus, those. adjustments allow a high degree of flexibility in the installation of the anemometer as a

A field effect transistor 38 is used to after the reference ratio of the Wheatstone bridge thus enabling or disabiling the air flow sensor via "ENABLE". In this way, the power consumption of the control circuit 30 is reduced, allowing the device to have a useful operating life when powered by batteries.

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## CLAIMS

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1. An aerosol drug dispensing device in which a metered dose of a pharmacologically active liquid is provided to a holding reservoir from which the dose is 5 - then dispensed as an nerosol spray, the holding reservoir including a perforat membrane from which the dose is dispensed by actuation of the perforate membrane to cause liquid flow through the perforate membrane, the perforate membrane having perforations having a reverse taper, namely a larger cross-sectional area at that face of the membrane eway from which liquid droplets emerge than at the opposite face of the membrane, characterised in that:

the holding reservoir is disposed in a chamber having a movable surface in the form of a resilient disphragm, which is stretchable to vary the volume of, and thus adjust the pressure in, the chamber to provide a pressure differential across the resilient disphragm during actuation of the perforate membrane such that the pressure within the holding reservoir is less than the ambient pressure on the opposite side of the perforate

a control device is arranged to control the stretching of the resilient disphragm . and thus the generation of the differential pressure across the perforate membrane.

- An acrosol drug dispensing device according to claim 1, wherein the resilient 20 diaphragm is formed from an elastomeric material.
  - An aerosol drug dispersing device according to claim 2, wherein the elastomeric material is nubber.
  - An aerosol drug dispensing device according to any of claims 1 to 3, wherein the chamber contains one or more valves for controlling the inici and/or outlet of fluids from the chamber.
- An acrosol drug dispensing device according to any of claims 1 to 4, wherein the control device is a reciprocating plunger which is connected to the resilient dispiragen substantially at the centre.
- An serosol drug dispensing device according to any of claims 1 to 5, wherein the maillent displayion is clamped by a spray head assembly substantially at its outer edge.

Figure 8a shows cross-sectional detail of a first example perforate membrane 16, which is operable to vibrate substantially in the direction of arrow 58 and which is suitable for use with the drug dispensing device 25 to produce fine acrosol sprays. In one embodiment, the membrane 16 comprises a circular layer of polymer which contains

5 a plurality of tapered conical perforations 50. Each perforation 50 has openings 53 in the front exit tace and openings 54 in the rear entry face, which perforations are laid out in a square lattice. Such perforations may be introduced into polymer membranes by,

for exemple, leser-drilling with an excimer laser.

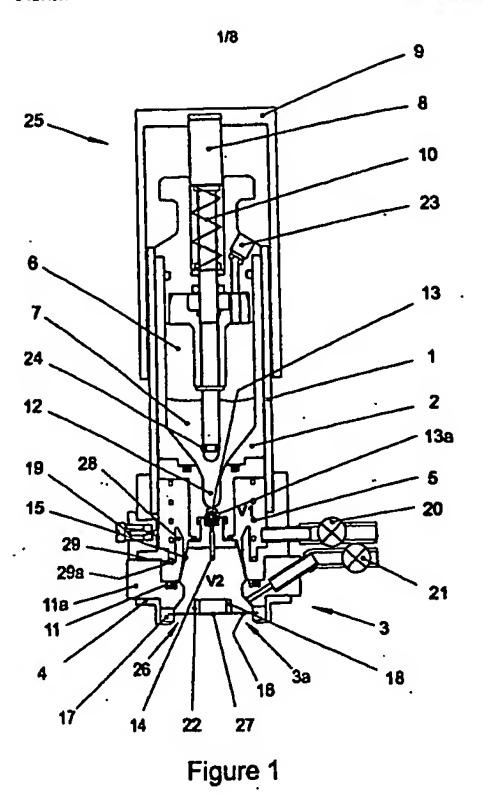
Figure 6b shows cross-sectional detail of a second example perforate membrane 2018, which membrane is operable to vibrate substantially and suitable for use with drug dispensing device 25 in the direction of arrow 58. The membrane is farmed as a circular disc of diameter 8mm from electroformed nickel, and is manufactured, for example, by Stork Veco of Earbeek, The Netherlands. Its thickness is 70 microns and is formed with a plurality of perforations shown at 2050 which, at front face 2051, are of diameter shown at "a" of 120 microns and at 'rear' face 2052 are of diameter shown at "b" of 30 microns. The perforations are laid out in an equilatoral triangular lattice of pitch 170,440. The profile of the perforations varies smoothly between the front and rear face diameters through the membrane thickness with substantially fist land regions (shown at "c") of empliest dimension 50µm in front face 2051.

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7. An aerosol drug dispensing device according to any of claims 1 to 6, including a seeding means to ensure that there is no fluid flow past the resilient disphragm.



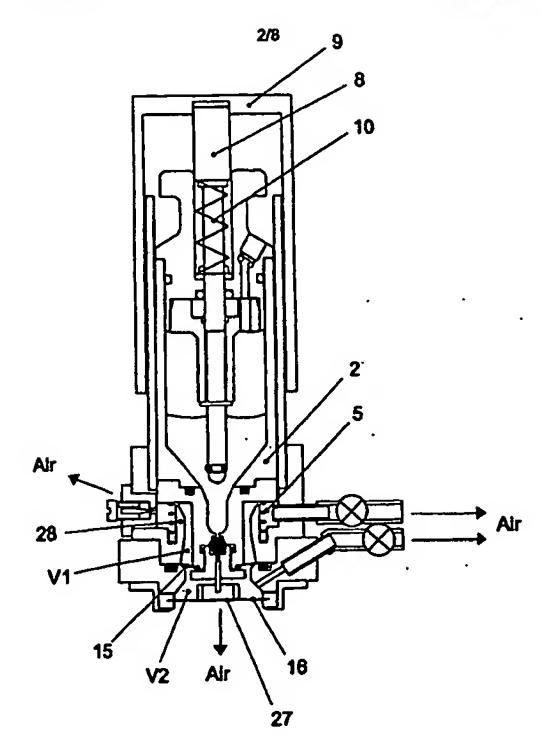


Figure 2

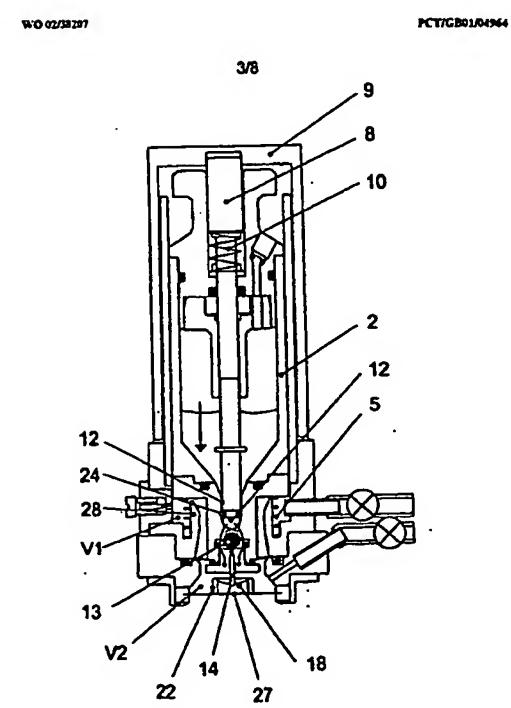


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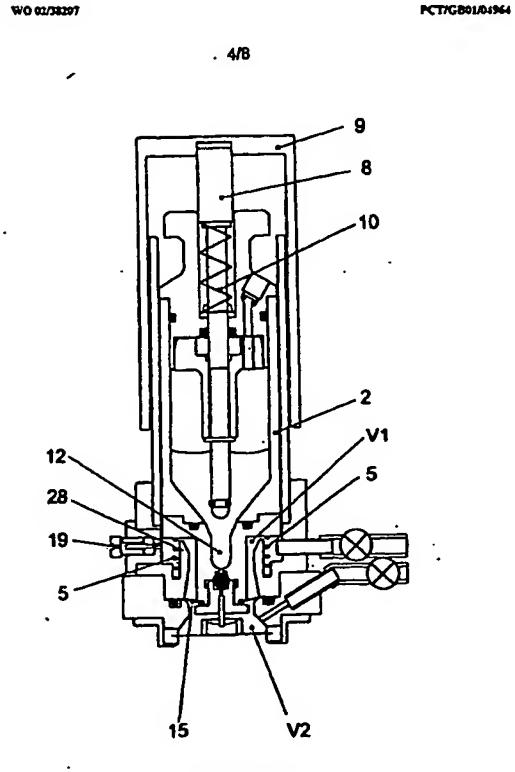


Figure 4

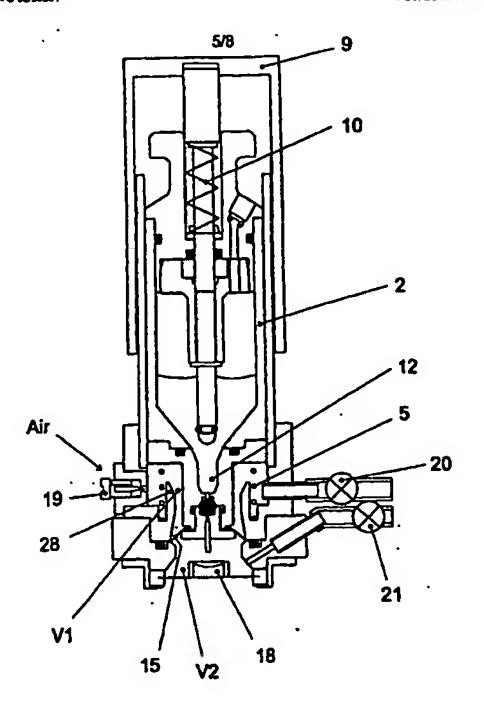


Figure 5

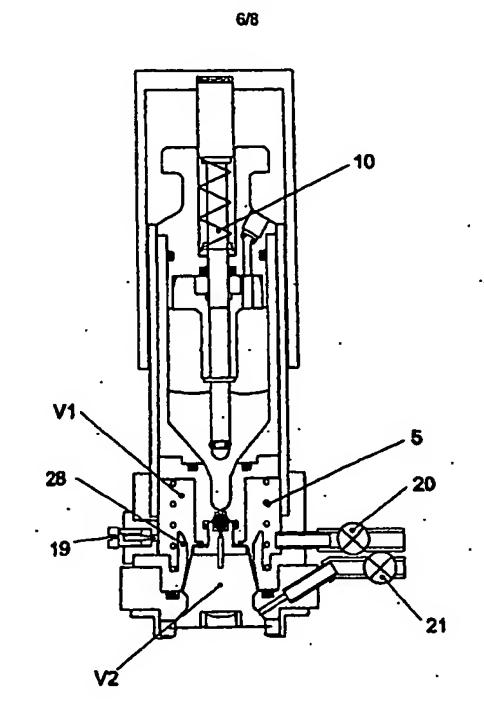
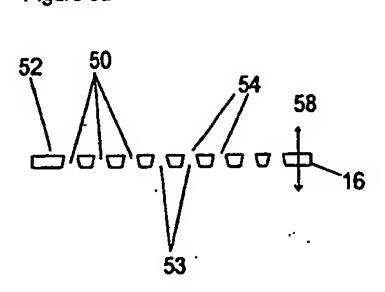


Figure 6

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